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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

POTTERY AT THE PARIS EXHIBITION.

From the French of Balmont, by MAUDE HAYWOOD.



THE display of Ceramic Art at the Paris

Exhibition may truly be classed among its greatest triumphs. The association of potters, with skilled engineers in their wonderful structures of iron, has averted the threatened sacrifice of art to utility, with which, in architecture, our century seemed likely to close. Emulated by the present novelty and the unlimited possibilities of this revived branch of their art, they have spared no pains in the improvement of their methods, their palette and their designs. From chemistry they have borrowed the secret of new or lost colorings, and from their predecessors

in the West, ideas which they, however, have known how to reproduce with originality.

Much has already been said in praise of the *Palais des Beaux Arts*, of the blue domes and the various edifices in the *Champs de Mars*, the decoration of which has been so happily effected by means of terra cotta, which in its polychromatic brilliancy recalls the ruined mosques of the Persian frontier; the marvellous harmony of the two elements of construction, the iron and the earthenware, each with its separate function of strength and ornamentation, is especially praiseworthy and remarkable.

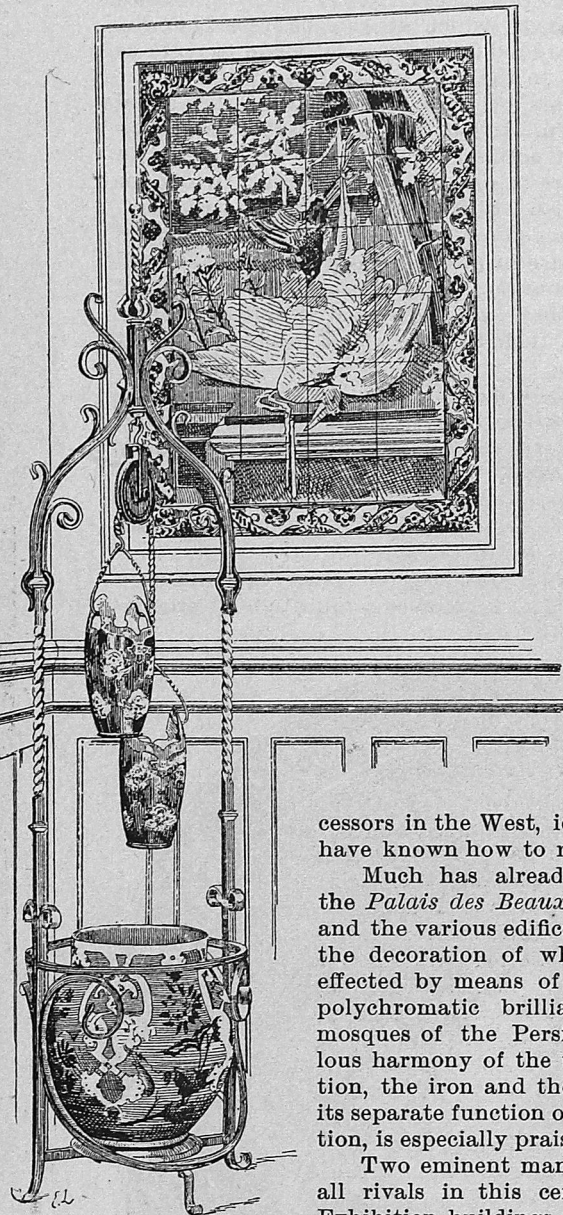
Two eminent manufacturers have distanced all rivals in this ceramic decoration of the Exhibition buildings, to which they have been the principal contributors; they are MM. E. Muller d'Ivry and J. Loebnitz. They entered at once into the original ideas of the architect, M. Formigé, and lent all their energy to innovations, of which the success remained to be proved, and have turned out from their kilns, pieces of work distinguished for their size, for the quality of their enamel and composition, and for their decorative character.

Whether applied to architectural or regular decoration, all styles of pottery are represented at the Exhibition. Besides the terra cotta and enamel tiles there are panels by M. Gillet; earthenware decorations for doorways by M. Gustave Roy, hardly inferior to those of MM. Muller and Loebnitz; "grès," by M. Delaherche, of which more shall be said; the reproductions by M. Fargue of the friezes of Archers from the palace of Darius; frescoes executed by the Longwy factory with vitrified sand mingled with ceramic colors or metallic oxides; and finally the works of MM. Achille and Louis Parvillée, which should not pass unnoticed.

Turning to another class of ceramics, which comprehends table services and ornamental pieces in infinite variety, we find the most striking and novel to be the production of "flambés." It is impossible here to enter into a technical explanation of what a "flambé" is; suffice it to say that exquisite coloring and gem-like effects can be obtained by means of the action of copper, a process which was well-known to the Chinese, and has for several years latterly been attempted in France. Since 1868, M. Theodore Deck, a clever potter, has made some curious experiments, and the manufactory at Sèvres has turned out some fine works of this kind. M. Deck has only very recently been made head of the Sèvres manufactory, and in spite of the short space of time which elapsed between his nomination and the opening of the Exhibition, he has been able to display some very creditable work in "Porcelaine Tendre." For the last thirty years or so efforts have been made to revive this style of work, for which the national workshops used to be so famous, and of which the secrets had been absolutely lost. M. Deck has succeeded in producing several pieces which, although not yet

perfect in technical detail, are clear in enamel and well penetrated by the colors, one small vase added later to the exhibit being particularly worthy of notice, as showing that the manufacture is capable of yet further development and improvement. Among the most attractive of the Sèvres work may be mentioned a number of plates and dishes treated with pictorial decorations and medallions, of which we show some specimens. M. Chaplet, who, after thirty years of special study, also seems to have gained absolute control over his capricious materials, so that, apparently at will, he can, on a single piece, obtain the most unexpected and diverse effects of color. Many other manufacturers exhibit "flambés," but of inferior merit, with the exception, perhaps, of M. Delaherche, who can himself claim distinction for his "grès," which are one of the successes of the ceramic section. This may be traced to two causes: In the first place, M. Delaherche is a true artist, with an artist's instincts and aims. Formerly a distinguished pupil of the *Ecole des Arts decoratifs*, he himself designs and models his own vases and other pieces, knowing how to choose the simplest forms, and the most suitable flowers or leaves for their decoration, as fitting best whatever work he may have in hand. He has besides succeeded in discovering and making use of an extremely powerful coloring. He has produced some remarkable flambés, and several are particularly noticeable, being transparent, and therefore showing through them the decoration beneath, with very happy effect.

Grès pottery as is known is made with the powder of sandstone and plastic siliceous clay, which has a very beautiful lustre obtained in the following manner: During the firing of the pottery, which lasts sometimes five or six days, common sea salt is thrown into the kiln, which becomes reduced to a vapor by the action of the heat. The fumes of the chloride of sodium (sea salt), combining with the clay in fusion produces that especial glaze characteristic of "grès." The origin of ceramic grès dates back to the end of the fourteenth century. German grès are very well known, especially the pitchers, beer cups and jugs of cologne. Many of these German grès might even pass for Flemish; the two kinds are, however, distinguishable at first sight: for, the German grès, besides being different in form and structure, often bear the arms of German princes or legends of that nation. The Flemish grès of the sixteenth century are extremely delicate in design, being the work of illustrious artists, amongst whom may be especially mentioned the following potters and sculptors: Hirschvogel, Melckelback, Wick, with whom the immortal author of the celebrated little "rustic figurines" spent two years before coming to Paris to establish the royal manufactory, of which the ruins of a kiln have been found in the court of the Tuileries. The value of the Flemish grès consists, besides the beautiful finish of their workmanship, in a



Faience, by
M. M. Utzschneider et Cie.,
the Paris Exhibition.



Plate, by Th. Deck.

brilliant and indestructible enamel, as well as in their fine quality obtained by a prolonged and intense firing. Beauvais has manufactured some remarkable grès, principally ewers, jugs and flower-pots.

To return to the porcelain, however, its rôle being not merely to charm the vision by ornamental work, however lovely the coloring, but since it has a definitely useful function also,

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we must turn to the table services, the tea and coffee sets, in order to complete our review. We must notice at once an increasing tendency towards perfection in the ware, towards the production of triumphs of skill amongst the smaller objects. Thus M. Hache, of Vierzon, side by side with his services designed by M. Rossigneux, of the very finest paste, exhibits tiny cups of the daintiest execution. M. Pillevuyt, a lover of Japan, has enlisted the fancy of M. Habert-Dys in the composition of a very original service. But the palm, for works in porcelain, undoubtedly belongs to the firm of Haviland, Limoges, who easily carried off the grand prize from their competitors.

The house of Haviland, directed by two brothers, M. M. Charles and Theodore Haviland, is something beyond a mere factory, it is conducted with due regard to art principles, and enjoys a deserved renown. The amount of their productions, too, is enormous. Table services of all kinds and all prices are turned out from Limoges by the thousand. If one might hazard a comparison, it could be said that this manufactory is to porcelain what that of M. Barbediennes is to bronze. One sees in both the same aim at the great and beautiful, the same care for minor details, the same thorough organization from beginning to end, uniting around one controlling master mind, the most skillful workers and artists procurable, and finally the same system of never permitting any inferior work to leave their ateliers. The draughtsmen who design the forms, the sculptors who model them, the painters and enamellers who apply the rich coloring and decorations, all the artists, in fact employed in their various capacities, each chosen for their special talents, work under the

decoration. In the Haviland house, however, it is far otherwise; the lids, handles and spouts of the teapots being carefully and artistically composed. Their necessity becomes their *raison d'être*, the charm of the ornamentation lying in its adaptation to the principles of utility. Sometimes a flower carefully thrown on the lid forms the means by which it can be raised, or the stem of a plant arranged around a vase may be made to serve as the handle. It is a return to the true spirit of decoration.

One of the finest exhibits of porcelain is that of the Royal Manufactory of Copenhagen. It has been a veritable revelation to connoisseurs. And yet nothing could be simpler either in style or coloring. The ware is principally either pure white, or of bright blue and brown, with gold delicately introduced. And with so little the Danish artists have achieved so much! In their decorations they are inspired directly by nature—landscapes from their own country, plants from the gardens of Copenhagen, fish which they can daily see sporting in their native waters—these form their themes, with a result unequalled in its charm.

Space will not permit of a more detailed account of the porcelain at the Exhibition. After France and Denmark, England sends the most interesting productions; the fine vases and dainty coffee cups of Messrs. Brown, Westhead, Moore & Co., the sumptuous pieces of Messrs. Goode, of the house of Daniell & Sons, the artistic work of Messrs. Doulton & Co., all attract deserved attention, as they did in 1878.

Pottery has made during the last ten years extraordinary progress. This general term now includes a multitude of produc-



Plates, Designed by Th. Deck.

direction of M. Theodore Haviland, like a trained band of musicians under a competent conductor. M. Chaplet, just spoken of as distinguished for his "flambés," was for a long time head of this branch of work in the manufactory; and it was there he executed his first "grès." Now it is M. Dammouse, the sculptor and successful ceramic artist, who designs nearly all the works of art for this firm. He notably executed the rich Louis XV service, which is fanciful in the extreme, yet satisfies with a rare perception all the complicated exigencies of our modern tables. He, too, partly composed those tea and coffee services—one of the glories of the Haviland house—which one sees carefully preserved in cases, and of which the special originality consists in their being all of different colors, so delicately and exquisitely fashioned that they might almost be made for fairy fingers; so fine their material, and varied their hue, that they appear like carved gems.

The utmost refinement and variety of taste and fancy, limited only by the requirements and conditions of the ware which they produce, forms a distinguishing feature of the celebrated manufactory of Limoges. An inscription might well be placed over the entrance of the works denoting a horror of the commonplace. For instance, as a rule nothing seems more difficult of attainment than originality in the form of the handle to a lid. Usually one sees a knob something like the cork of a bottle, which has neither reason nor meaning, nor any special accord with the spirit or design. It merely fulfils its function of a handle, without drawing on the imagination of the artist to produce something which shall be an essential element of the

tions of which it is true, clay and silica form the base, but which have been transformed at pleasure by the ingenuity of artists, and richly decorated by recourse to the aid of chemical science. At the Exhibition, there are perhaps fifty potters, who fashioning the ware according to their fancy, have succeeded in producing individual works, decorating the paste with colorings after their own processes, obtaining in the kilns an uncertain, but often very happy result. Whether with delicate porcelain or coarser pottery, manufacturers of to-day are untiring in their research for new effects and novelty of ornamentation. The discoveries of the last few years have set them on the track of fresh departures. But it is to be sincerely hoped that eagerness in the search for new agents and processes, will not lead to a forgetfulness of the paramount importance of grace and purity of form. Chemistry must never be allowed to kill art. It should always remain a legitimate means, but never be permitted to become the final aim and end.

Amongst those who have produced the most artistic pottery, we may mention the name of M. Lachenal, who has obtained several unique results in his many and varied works. He has discovered a paste which while transparent is yet infusible. Thus he has a large vase ornamented with ivy leaves in low relief, which show the veins, either white, blue or greenish, transparent under the glaze. Usually when the paste is infusible it is opaque, but this obstacle M. Lachenal has overcome. Another novelty is his grays applied on a special paste, giving to the pieces so treated a particularly harmonious effect.

Another potter, unrivalled for his novel processes and deco-

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rative researches is M. Emile Gallé. He has produced a dense, light, hard and very clear paste, with which he has gained infinite variety by the introduction of the most unexpected combinations of color, and has succeeded in obtaining considerable originality in the expression of his ideas, which frequently prove to be most poetical. Some of his vases are decorated with the

but little trouble, some of the best specimens of the pottery of both hemispheres. Certainly the directors of this establishment, who have for disposal all classes of works, must be a blessing to amateurs without leisure or ability to search out for themselves the productions of the various potteries, which they may wish to possess.



Dinner Service made for Sarah Bernhardt by M. Lachenal.

representations of the legends of Lorraine or with the story of the shepherdess of Domrémy, quaint and delicate.

Amongst those manufacturers who execute in large quantities all kinds of pottery, table services of various prices as well as decorative panels, it is only right to mention the firm of Utzschneider & Co., whose establishment at Sarreguenimes and Digne are of considerable importance. They had the ingenious idea of

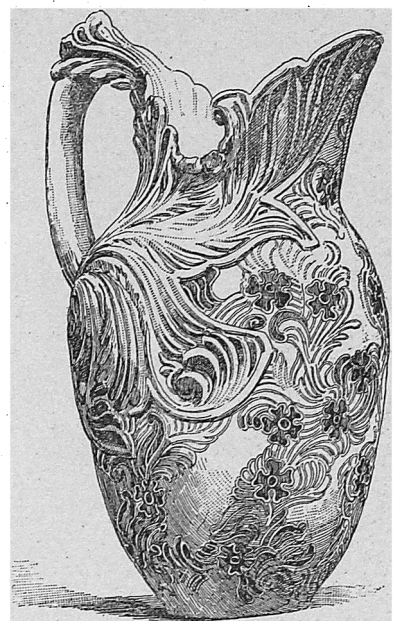
Critics may also, perhaps, recognize a claim on their gratitude, at being able to turn to this representative display of the Exhibition, after a long and laborious examination of the exhibits in these galleries. The firm have created a specialty in ceramics; they embrace, besides their own works, the best productions of all well-known potteries. Their catalogue is that of a regular museum. They have English, Belgian, Italian and



Grès artistique, genre Carrare, de MM. Doullon et C^{ie}.



Grès artistique, genre Carrare.



Grès artistique, genre Carrare.

organizing their exhibit in the dining-room of the Pavillon du Gaz, which they have decorated, thus showing the various application of their industry. The walls are covered with panels of various sizes.

This firm exhibits a summary of the entire ceramic section, where visitors, pressed for time, can see in a short while, with

Austrian ware, Haviland porcelain, vases by Chaplet, dishes by Damouse, and pieces of many other distinguished artists. Ornaments for cabinets, table services, enormous vases, dainty toilette appurtenances, objects for use or luxury, suitable for all tastes and purses, are to be found in their collection, representative probably of some hundred or more different factories.